Sankashti Vrat Katha (Vaishakh)

RantiDev, a noble king rules his kingdom wisely. He is very powerful and befriends even devas like Yama, Kuber and Indra. Dhumraketu, a devout man and a Brahmin scholar, lives in RantiDev's kingdom. He lives a simple life and spends the better part of the day performing rituals and meditating.

Dhumraketu has two wives – Sushila and Chanchal. He never interferes in any of the domestic matters and accepts both his wives just the way they are. He knows they have very different temperaments. But he treats them with equal respect. He neither foists his opinions nor gives any advice to either of his wives.

Chanchal, his younger wife is a lovely woman. She spends long hours dressing up, loves the good things of life and cooks delicious meals thrice in a day. She feels happy when her husband eats the food that she cooks with relish and appreciates her.

Sushila, his senior wife, however, is a mature woman who believes in simplicity. She is an ardent devotee of Lord Ganesha and fasts on all Sankat Chaturthis. She cooks only sattvic meals, performs all the rites and rituals on all festive occasions and derives a lot of peace from it all.

DhumraKetu, in being true to his nature, spends his time equally with both his wives. After a few years, Chanchal gives birth to a handsome chubby boy and Sushila gives birth to a beautiful baby girl. Chanchal's boy and Sushila's girl too have

different temperaments. Sushila's girl is a quiet smiling child. She demands no attention from anyone. She is content when Sushila feeds her regularly after which she plays by herself and goes to sleep on her own. Chanchal's son, however, loves all the attention that he gets. He laughs gleefully when his neighbours shower him with gifts and indulge all his whims and fancies.

One day, when Chanchal and Sushila are doing their household chores, Chanchal looks at Sushila and says, "Why do you fast for so many days in a month Sushila? Why do you pray with such fervour to Lord Ganesha? You fast for the entire day on Sankashtis. And you eat a specific simple meal only after your sight the moon. What have you gained by observing all these rituals and fasts?

Look at me. I take such good care of myself and my body. I like to eat good food and I make it a point to wear good clothes and look well-groomed at all times. I enjoy my life to the fullest and love interacting with everyone. And I am blessed with a boy.

Now take a look at yourself. You look weak and thin. You observe so many fasts and rituals that you rarely have time for the good things of life. And what did the Gods bless you with despite doing all this? A daughter? And she doesn't even need your attention.

Honestly, Sushila, if you ask me, I think Dhumraketu spends time with you only because he thinks it is his duty to do so. I'm sure if he is given a choice he will spend all this time only with a vivacious person like me."

Sushila’s eyes well up with tears when she hears the barbed words of Chanchal. She wipes her tears with grim determination. It is the month of Vaishakh and Sankashti on that day. She seats the idol of Ekadanta Ganapathi on the Shri Chakra Peetam, makes halwa out of Kamal Gatta and offers it to Ekadanta Ganapathi. She fasts for the whole day and does her best to shrug off the sarcastic comments of her co-wife. She holds her daughter close to her bosom that night and cries herself to sleep. She is so deeply hurt by Chanchal’s words that she forgets to break her fast after seeing the moon.

Ekadanta Ganapathi is deeply upset when he sees Sushila crying. He knows that Sushila has not yet broken her fast. So Ekadanta Ganapathi visits Sushila in her dream that night and says, “Sushila I am very pleased by your devotion. I know you. You will never ask me for a boon even if I offer you one. So let me offer you one myself. Gemstones will fall out of your daughter’s mouth after she eats her meals. And you will also be blessed with a boy who will be a scholar just like his father in the near future.”

Sushila remembers the dream when she wakes up the next day and wonders if Ekadanta Ganapathi has really blessed her. She is amazed to see a couple of gemstones falling out of her daughter’s mouth every time she finishes eating a meal. She does not discuss this with anyone else though because she knows no one will believe her. She also realizes that she is going to become a mother again shortly. Dhumraketu is happy to hear the news but unfortunately, he dies soon after she gives birth to a healthy boy baby.

Sushila and Chanchal are heartbroken when Dhumraketu passes away. Chanchal reveals her true intentions and sends Sushila out of Dhumraketu's house. She says that she had always been Dhumraketu's favourite wife so all his property rightfully belongs to her alone.

Sushila leaves her home with tears in her eyes. She sells the gemstones that fall out of her daughter's mouth regularly, buys a small house for herself and lives comfortably with her two children. She continues to fast on all Sankashtis.

Soon Chanchal comes to know that gemstones fall out of Sushila's daughter's mouth regularly. Chanchal feels jealous. So one day she picks up Sushila's daughter when she is playing outside and throws her into a nearby well.

Sushila is oblivious to all this. She is busy preparing Kamal Gatta halwa for Ekadanta Ganapathi because it is Sankat Chaturthi for the month of Vaishakh again that day. She still remembers Chanchal's venomous words but busies herself with her preparations for Ekadanta Ganapathi and dismisses such thoughts from her mind.

When it is time for her to catch a glimpse of the moon and break her fast, she goes in search of her daughter and finds her playing happily with the other children in the street. Chanchal is stunned to see Sushila's daughter alive. She sees them both breaking their fast together after worshipping Lord Ekadanta Ganapathi.

Chanchal regrets her actions now. She rushes to Sushila and begs for forgiveness. Chanchal knows that Ekadanta Ganapathi protected Sushila’s daughter from harm. She blurts out the truth to Sushila and starts crying. Sushila forgives her immediately. Chanchal says, “Today, I have realized how powerful faith can be. I too will observe all the rites and rituals that are associated with Sankat Chaturthi and will fast along with you on all Sankashtis.”

Lord Ekadanta Ganapathi looks at Sushila and Chanchal with a twinkle in his eyes. He feels happy because he has brought the inmates of a family closer together.

And that is why we must listen to Lord Ganesha’s stories on Sankashtis - for he is the remover of obstacles and brings people closer together. Krishna narrates these Vrat Kathas to Yudhishtra and tells him the same thing - that if he worships Lord Ganesha and fasts on Sankashtis along with his entire family, they will be able to overcome all their obstacles and regain the kingdom that they had lost.